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Memorandum for NIO/GPF

Subject: Mediterranean Workshop, 28 May 87

Review of the Mediterranean's military significance prompted one or more workshop participant to comment as noted below, with little or no group dissension from the general thrust of the point(s) being made. The net result of more than an hour's discussion was recognition by all present that there are cogent military reasons why Greek-Turkish political differences must be resolved, (even though there were differing views concerning the extent of external--especially US--involvement that should occur at this time to bring the Greeks and the Turks together). There seemed to be general agreement that something needs to be done.

Some mention was made of eastern and southern Mediterranean littoral states, primarily in the context of a US-Israeli lash-up and the potential threat posed by the presence of large amounts of Soviet military equipment in Libya. Discussion of Mediterranean military operations in the main, however, almost automatically assumed a NATO-Warsaw Pact framework. As no group consensus emerged that Mediterranean military operations would occur exclusively in an East-West context, this propensity to revert to the familiar, in my opinion, highlighted a potential pitfall: although consideration of Greece and Turkey in terms of their NATO affiliation is natural, there are decidedly non-NATO aspects to their regional associations that must not be overlooked, obscured or deliberately allowed to be outweighed by more traditional US and NATO planning assumptions. Among the more prominent points made:

- The Mediterranean retains its military importance in the context of an East-West conflict. The Straits, US basing rights, and participation by both Greece and Turkey in support of established NATO military goals are deemed to be of paramount importance. (This last assumption was questioned but not refuted.) That the Mediterranean probably would figure in any US-Soviet limited conflict, regardless of where it originated, is not disputed. Today, with more thought being given to the probability of conventional rather than nuclear war occurring, and with the USSR's new leadership now focusing on fighting a conventional conflict, the Soviets are likely to realign both their strategy toward and their forces in the Mediterranean. Securing the Turkish Straits by controlling Thrace with ground forces remains a major Soviet regional military objective, and Greece must be an active military player if this is to be prevented.

- The Eastern Mediterranean is the area of primary focus for Mediterranean military operations, with agreement that Greece and

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Turkey figure prominently in all reasonable scenarios. Greece must play a military role if the Eastern Mediterranean is to be defended; militarily, it is more important to resolve Greece's alienation from the Alliance than it is to solve Greek-Turkish bilateral differences per se. Nevertheless, Greek-Turkish political disagreements and constant bickering--especially Greece's hardline stance vis-a-vis Turkey in NATO fora--are damaging Alliance solidarity and could prompt one or the other to forego its military commitments. (No feeling was expressed that both would opt for neutrality.) Turkey is more likely to assume a neutral stance if past actions are a reliable indicator. A decision by either Greece or Turkey to side with the allies or to remain neutral probably would be influenced by who was ahead in a US-Soviet conflict.

- Technological advances in aircraft management and control render obsolete the substance of certain Greek-Turkish arguments on Aegean command and control arrangements. (This was something of a "revelation" to many participants.) The advent of AWACS means that reversion to disputed operational boundaries {MC 38/4} in wartime is not desirable. Therefore, attempts to resolve the aerial portion of what is now a "non-problem" would be wasted effort. A question lingers as to Greek and Turkish understanding or acknowledgment of, or agreement with, this viewpoint. It is apparent, however, that although the protagonists remain adamant regarding their respective positions on this longstanding, contentious issue, time has brought a real change, one worthy of examination with an eye to reducing bilateral tensions on at least one element of a major sticking point in Greek-Turkish relations. It would be desirable to modify NATO exercises to reflect this technological advancement as a way of partially bridging Greek and Turkish Aegean command and control differences.

Discussion of the Mediterranean's role in a limited US-Soviet conflict prompted thoughtful, insightful exchanges which served the intended purpose of laying the groundwork for examining ways to overcome the existing impasse in Greek-Turkish relations. Hopefully, it also reaffirmed to the workshop's non-military participants the real problems military planners face when postulating operational objectives in this volatile region. Time well spent.

[Redacted]

8 June 1987

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cf: AMB Stearns

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